

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Adult Immunizations**

- I thought immunizations were for children. Why do I need to be immunized?
- Which immunizations do I need?
- Are the flu and pneumonia shots covered by Medicare?
- Can I get the flu from a flu shot?
- Does the flu shot really work?
- Does the pneumonia shot really work?

### **I thought immunizations were for children. Why do I need to be immunized?**

Immunizations are the best way to protect yourself from vaccine-preventable diseases such as influenza (flu), pneumococcal disease (pneumonia) and hepatitis B.

Pneumococcal pneumonia and complications from influenza together represent the fifth leading cause of death for older adults. Over 40,000 older adults in the United States die each year from these diseases. Receiving vaccinations against influenza, pneumonia, chickenpox, hepatitis B, measles, mumps, tetanus and rubella also will protect your friends and family from these diseases as well, and reduce the risk of spreading these diseases to other people. Remember, getting the disease is much more likely to cause serious problems than getting the vaccine!

### **Which immunizations do I need?**

<b>IMMUNIZATION</b>	<b>WHO NEEDS IT</b>	<b>HOW OFTEN</b>
<b>INFLUENZA (Flu)</b>	Adults 50+	Once each year, beginning mid-October
<b>PNEUMOCOCCAL (Pneumonia)</b>	Adults 65+	Once and usually does not need to be repeated
<b>TETANUS-DIPHTHERIA</b>	Adults 18+	Booster shot every 10 years
<b>CHICKENPOX</b>	Adults with no history of the disease and adults living with children	Two doses separated by 4-8 weeks
<b>MEASLES-MUMPS-RUBELLA (MMR)</b>	Adults born after 1956 who do not have documentation of receiving this vaccine	One dose; two doses recommended for college students and health care professionals
<b>HEPATITIS B</b>	High risk individuals	Three doses required with no booster dose

### **Are the flu and pneumonia shots covered by Medicare?**

Yes! The flu and pneumonia shots are covered through Medicare part B. This means these immunizations are free to adults covered by Medicare. Also, many insurance companies will pay for certain immunizations. It is always a good idea to call your insurance company to find out about fees.

### **Can I get the flu from the flu shot?**

No. It is not possible to get flu from the vaccine. However, the flu vaccine does not protect you from other viruses that sometimes feel like the flu.

### **I got the flu even though I received a flu shot. Does this mean the flu vaccine does not work?**

The flu vaccine is not 100% effective in preventing flu. It is possible for some people to still get influenza even after taking the flu shot. However, these people usually get a milder case of the flu than they otherwise would get. The risk of hospitalization and death from complications of influenza are greatly reduced as well. Protection from influenza vaccine usually begins within two weeks of receiving the vaccine.

### **I got pneumonia even though I received the vaccine. Does this mean the pneumococcal (pneumonia) vaccine does not work?**

The pneumonia vaccine is not 100% effective in preventing pneumonia. It protects against the 23 different types of *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria that are responsible for causing greater than 90% of all pneumococcal disease cases. However, the vaccine is about 50% effective in preventing complications of pneumococcal pneumonia (such as blood and brain infections) and death.